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# ICH ONE?

AND

# OTHER ANTE BELLUM DAYS

MARY M. PLEASANTS

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1910

# WHICH ONE?

AND

# OTHER ANTE BELLUM DAYS

BY

MARY M. PLEASANTS

JAMES H. EARLE COMPANY
BOSTON

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MARY M. PLEASANTS

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TO HOLLINS STUDENTS OF SIXTY-SEVEN YEARS
THIS MODEST PICTURE OF
THE HUMBLE FRIENDS OF OUR FATHERS
IS DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR

# *PREFACE*

As a book without a preface resembles a house without a portico, I shall not send out my loving tribute to the old-time mammy and butler without a few words of explanation of its appearance at this time.

Although books which purport to depict the character of *ante bellum* trusted, slaves of the South, are numerous, there are very few of them which give *true pictures* of the house-servants of those days, and there is consequent need of additions to the genuine class. Therefore, both from the experiences of my friends and from my own life, I have collected four striking types of house-servants to perpetuate in print, for the enlightenment of future generations, *what was the real, ante bellum, family slave.*

*M. M. P.*

MAMMY PATSY

# WHICH ONE?

# WHICH ONE?

## A REMINISCENCE

Since Thackeray, in The Diary of C. Jeames de la Pluche, and Dickens, in the novel utterances of Samuel Weller, have immortalized the English dialect of valets, I have always been much interested in the peculiarities of speech of all low classes of people. In America, where a cosmopolitan population furnishes the dialects of the Chinaman, Irishman, Dutchman, Frenchman and, indeed, what not, there is fine opportunity to indulge my proclivity. But of all the mongrel English spoken in the United States, the speech of the *ante bellum* negro of the South combines both most attraction in its musical simplicity of language and union of humor and pathos.

Not many years ago, while I was visiting the home of Mr. Eugene Hodson,— situated in Maryland near the Virginia line,—after he had shown me the premises and explained his mode of farming in the *post bellum* days, he laughed and said,

"I have but one relict of the *ante bellum* times at Buena Vista to show you."

"I shall be most happy to see it," answered I.

"It is what you may not expect, but I am sure you will be satisfied with its quality."

With these words, he led me to a small but comfortable house, not far from his residence, and, to his light knock receiving a cheerful "Come in," opened the door and presented me to an old negro woman, as his "dear Mammy Patsy."

I can never forget either the proud, respectful manner, in which he introduced me nor the stately curtsey with which the tur-

baned head of " Mammy Patsy " returned my cordial greeting.

She formed, indeed, a picture worth looking at with her figure bent by the weight of eighty years (though her dark countenance hardly showed the wrinkles natural to a white person of sixty), while her dull eyes lighted with hospitable pleasure and she moved with the celerity of a young person, to give us seats.

"Now, Mammy, I want you to tell Mr. Barbour one of your good, old-time stories, for I know that he never heard any better!" said my host, as soon as the usual civilities were finished.

"De Lord, honey, does you think Mr. Barbour got time to listen to de racket uv an ole ooman like me—bout to drap off into de grave?" was the reply.

"The idea of you talking about dropping off, when you are going to outlive me yet—

the one whom you raised up!" responded my host, with a laugh.

"Just listen at Mars Eugene, making fun uv his own ole mammy dat way!" said she.

"Do tell me one of those stories," put in I, really interested, from this preamble, in what she could tell.

"Well, den, ef you is sure you'd like it, I'll try to bring to membrunce some uv dem tales, de chillun used to git me to tell — mebbe de big corn-shuckin time or de infar* at our house, when Miss Sallie git married — or dat turrible time when my boy was brung home or —"

"Tell the last," I interrupted, feeling sure by the expression of her countenance, when she referred to the last, that it was her trump-card.

"Well, den, once on a time (as dey used to tell me bout Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox an

*Reception or party.

dem 'ters), my Mistis had more little gals than mos folks, but not a single boy in de fambly. But her last chillun was boys, an dey both come at once, seem like to make up for lost time! Some folks say dat twins aint no more trouble than single chillun, but my speunce don't tell sich a tale. When de twins was born, my Peter was jist two weeks ole an, as Mistis didn't give no milk, an she didn't want dem to be raised on de bottle, I nussed de twins long uv my own boy. De names of dem was Eugene and Frank (an da sits one by you, now) an two black-eye peas couldn't be more like outside den dey was. An yit, as dey grow, I never seed such a diffunce in de idees uv two mortals as in dem same twins. Seem like de Lord done made dem zactly like outside for to be zactly opposite inside. Even as little babies, dey aint seem to be de same, ceptin to love deir parents an mammy, an, when dey gets

older, it all de same thing. An as to de ole mammy, dey was so good and kind to her dat she never could tell which one she loved de best, an when she try to think uv dem separate, dey allers pear de same to her. Sometimes, I study an study on dis her question uv which one I set more store by, but it aint no use, for it allers come to de same end. Well, time runs mighty fast away, an I aint tryin to tell you nothin bout chillun no way. Only I bleeged to show you why I love dem twins so much."

With these words, she raised the corner of her gingham apron,—wiped a few tears from her eyes and resumed, almost as if she saw a vision before her. "Fust thing Patsy know, dem twins is in pants, an den gwine to school at home, an den to Varsitys. Like dey been disagreeing fore, dey say dey want to go to diffunt schools, an Marster let dem do it, case he say dey must be happy. It want dat

my boys didn't think a heap of one nuther; but dey, nat'rally didn't like de same things an dey couldn't holp it. So dey come an go to de big schools year after year, an, fore ole Patsy dreamin uv sech a thing, da dey grown young men wid mustaches an six footers at dat! I wish you could hab seen dem in dem days, wid sich quality manners an so tall an hansome, dat it mek my poor, ole heart most bust wid pride, for to look at dem! Bout dis time, we lost our marster, an our boys had to divide agin bout what dey gwine to be. Eugene lowed dat he will take he Pa's place as farmer, and Frank gwine to practice law, an dey both so hansome and sich ketches* dat I knowed de gals was nigh crazy bout dem!"

While describing the attractions of her young masters, her dull eyes were lighted with enthusiasm, and her whole face was

*Catches.

transformed with pride and satisfaction. But as suddenly as an electric light is quenched by turning a button, the fire died out of her countenance and with a deep sigh, she returned to her narrative with, "But all dis aint my tellin bout de turrible time, what came on us soon arter dat. Fore dey git time to settle down — all uv a suddent — de white folks gun to talk bout war an dat tween de North and de South! My boys sed dey gwine to fight for state's rights or sumthin like dat in de South an dey gwine to fight for de Union or sumthin uv dat kind in de North, whilst de niggers sed dey all gwine to fight bout dem. I aint got much sense bout politics, an I only knows dat my boys bleeged to go on one side or nuther an git kilt. But it want de end of our combunxions* till dem same twins — whar Mistis an me loved more'n all de gals in de fambly

*Disturbances.

— find dey bleeged to take diffunt sides in de war, case Eugene lowed it was right to keep de Union an Frank find he can't go gin de South and be happy ! Dem was de times uv trouble sure-nough ! When I gun to think bout Eugene fightin to give me freedom, I could bar it, but, jist then, allers come de turrible thought uv Frank being kilt to git it, and I didn't want it no more ! But it want no use for Mistis nor sisters nor poor ole Patsy to try to change dem minds, nor did our weepins an wailins keep dem from listing at de right time an gwine away wid cheerfulness. I could tell you much bout our sad times at Buena Vista endurin uv de war, but I gun to tell you nuther tale, an must git da soon. Well one night, arter a long, long time (I forgit de year, but I know it was cold weather, case I had on a linsey-woolsey dress an de rain barr'ls in de back yard was froze over), one Wenesday

night, when Mistis an her only single darter Mary was up-stars in her chamber a-readin an sewin an I was a-settin de breakfast-table (jist a-puttin on de crochet mats, whar Mrs. Preston sont Mistis for a Chrismas gift), when I heerd wheels roll up to de back gate and stop! Mussy on us! My ole heart most stop beatin wid de stoppin uv dem wheels, for I seem to know dat sumthin awful done happen to one uv my boys. But I manage to git quick to de passage door, an fore I know it, I was most choked wid a big hug from my own Frank, whar, pale as a ghost, whispered, 'Don't holloa, Mammy, an skeer Mother more than she bleeged to be, for I have bad enough news, God knows.'

"'My boy is dade,' I gun to say, but he stop me wid,—'No, not dade, thank God, but wounded bad, an I have brung him home in an ambulance wid de surgeon an Peter an

have traveled all day an —' But, jist den, Mistis come down de steps, an fall into Frank's strong arms, an I hustle up-stars to gid ready de bed an fire for our poor boy, whar been jostled all day in a wagin wid a wound. Tho' my knees was a-shakin under me like palsy an my head was a-singin an a-ringin, I manage to git everything ready by de time Frank an de surgeon brung him on a litter up de stars, lookin more like dade dan live man. Fore de Lord, I never had no sich combunxion in my life as den, an I wonder now how we ever stood de trouble uv dat night like we did !

" Mistis an me follow dem in de room, same as gwine to a berryin, an, tween us, we soon git him in de bed like de doctor want. 'Twas runnin here an da,— bringin dis an dat,— bindin up de wound,— givin liquor to give him strength, an, soon, we could all stand roun an leave to de good

Lord to bless our work to save his life! Frank stood da by de pillow, so strong an brown an grand, and da, on de pillow, lay his twin so pale an white an weak dat, at de foot uv de bed, deir Mammy, whar had nussed dem at de breast, found herself a-bringing up agin de ole question, which one she love de best,— fur de fust time to know dat it was Eugene an not Frank! De truth come on me so suddent dat I most jump up wid surprise an wonder. But den I brung to membrunce how Mistis often said dat folks (an specially mothers) allers love best de chile whar is deformed or blind or cracked or sick in some way,— an now I understands it well! When I looks from de strength uv my Frank to de weakness uv my Eugene, dar come a-honein* arter de last, whar I don't have for de fust. Seem like I would give my right hand,— den an da,—

*Sympathy.

to raise up de poor boy an make him zactly like his twin again!"

"But since de doctor say we must leave him fur a hour to him alone to watch, I slip down-stars to see my son, Peter,— to give him a good supper an to hear all he kin tell me bout de turrible 'fair. I forgit to tell you dat, when our boys went off, both uv dem wanted Peter for servant, an, when dey done draw straws bout it peaceably, Frank drawed him, which seem like it was an accident den, but de Almighty meant it for good, arter all. I tole Peter to eat a good supper an warm hisself well, an, den, to tell ole Mammy all he knowed. An dis is what he tole, de best I can ricollect it. 'Mammy,' sez he, 'when I went to de war long uv Mars Frank, I never was much consarned bout fightin nor killin nuther, an we went long mighty well dout nothin happenin to us, even till yistiddy mornin. Seem like when

Mars Frank go to battle I always feared he would kill his brother Eugene, an I allers monstous glad to know dat he aint in de army gin ours, when he come back. Well, you must know dat we been skirmishin bout Winchester over and over agin, sometimes it gittin in our lines, an, sometimes, in dem 'ters, an I bin wonderin, ef we will ever settle who it longs to for good an all! Yistiddy, fore crack er day, Captain Farish ordered out his company to make a raid, an Mars Frank left me in de camp, as he done before. But bout six o'clock, arter I bin hearin powerful shootin gwine on for some time, two uv our men come back to camp a-carryin a wounded soldier, an I hear one say to nuther one, "I could have sworn dat was Frank Hodson, dat I wounded in de woods, nigh de fence, ceptin for his blue clothes!"

"'"Lord save us, Jim!"' sez tother one, '"I low dat you has wounded poor Frank's

twin brother, whar wears de blue instid uv de gray, like he ought to do!"

"'I aint stoppin to hear more, case my heart done drap to my shoes, an I know I must find him quick, of it mought be too late. I couldn't wait for Mars Frank to come, but I called Mr. Fitzhugh's boy, whar was kind-hearted enough to go wid me to help tote him to de camp. But sich a time as we had, Mammy, a-huntin for our poor Mars Eugene! I heerd him say dat he wounded him in de woods nigh de fence, an, of course, da, I went an looked all I could, by de dim light (it want much arter daybreak), but me an Bill both couldnt see nuthin uv him nowhar! I feel mighty bad an most ready to cry, when I members dat you allers, in your troubles, prayed to God to holp you, an I gun to pray de good Lord to keep Mars Eugene alive an low me to find him soon. It peared to me like somethin thar tell me,

"Peter, keep on gwine on till you find him." An so I did! It want so long, nuther, fore I heerd a groan, in a ditch, what I jist able to see by de light gittin brighter, an, when I run da, sure enough, Mars Eugene was a-layin welterin in his blood an pale as a sheet, an, more'n dat, he didn't know nuthin — not 'nough to speak to me. So me an Bill hustle to git him on de litter an bring him, fast as we kin, to de surgeon in de camp. An it came to pass dat fore Mars Frank git back from skirmishin, de surgeon done dress his brother's wound in de breast, an he kinder dozin and restin some! But, oh, my Mammy, I'se glad you couldn't see dat scene, when de well twin come back an find de wounded one in de camp! I lowed Mars Frank gwine to faint away wid grief, fur I never seed him so upset by nuthin fore this! But it aint no time for weepins wid him, fur he sez to me, sez he, "Peter, we must git

brother home some way!" Den he hustle roun and splain de sad bizness to de captain, an git his permit to have a surgeon an ambulance, driver an hosses an me an him for to carry Mars Eugene into Maryland — even to dis here, same, ole Buena Vista, whar we live! Thanks to de good Lord, we made a tolerable easy trip uv it wid de holp uv beds an pillows an right medicines an doctor an brother, an here we is, I hope, to git him well soon!' Dis is bout what Peter tole me how my poor boy come to be a-layin upstars pale as a sheet wid his beautiful haar thrown back off uv his forehead — an his soft eyes closed — an his dear breath a-comin so faint-like, as to pear like his last! So, as I knows all I kin bout it, I tips back up-stars to set by his bed-side, wid my Mistis, an holp to make him come too, if possible. An, bless de Lord, our prars an works was owned uv Him, an it want many hours fore de

doctor took Mistis in de passage an say — sez he,— 'Mrs. Hodson, I am glad to tell you dat, now, all danger uv death is past, an you only need right nussin to bring him soon to —' (I forgits de big word he used but he meant 'git well'). ' An sure nough, in a few months, Mars Eugene was agin well — an de war was over — an all de niggers (or colored folks as dey now calls deyselves) was free, an Mars Frank done 'gone to de bar' (as dey call it) an we was broke up at ole Buena Vista ! Most uv de plantation niggers done'vail demselves uv freedom an left Mars Eugene; but one day, he come to me an say, sez he, 'Mammy Patsy, I spose you knows dat you is now free an kin go when you want to, but I come to tell you dat, whiles you kin go ef you want to, I would love to hab you live with me or Frank all your life. Either — or both uv us — will pay you wages as long as you choose to work, an, when you

git tired, we will take care uv you de rest uv your days, dear ole Mammy!'

"When Mars Eugene — whar sits opposite you da right now, said dem words, I busted into tears an sponded (he knows it well, don't you, honey?) Whar I gwine to my boy? What better place on dis here globe for Patsy than ole Buena Vista wid my Mistis an her chillun? Here, I is lived dis long an here I spect to die wid my best friends!' An, Mr. Barbour, when I gun to think bout both Eugene an Frank wantin ole Mammy to live wid dem, my ole heart went back to de same place whar it was when dey was little, an, sence den, I never kin tell no more which one I love de best."

Finis.

AUNT CINDY

# "MY MISTIS"

# "MY MISTIS"

There were many people and things at Lauderdale beyond the one "who bore a mind that envy could not but call fair" to interest and detain me longer than I expected. First there was the hearty hospitality of my host and hostess — Mr. and Mrs. Johnston — than which nothing could have been more calculated to make me hate to leave. Then, there was the society of several — nay many — of the most charming girls I ever saw — to hold me like a strong magnet. Besides, there were the social customs of the Old Dominion that formed a study of a novel and interesting nature to a Rhode Islander. Conspicuous among these was the study of the negro in his state of slavery, in the good old *ante bellum* days. I had abundant oppor-

tunity to get well acquainted with both the household specimens, whose close contact with the white people had brought them to a much higher civilization than many of the white population even in their own state — and the field hands or "quarter-niggers" as they were called. It happened that Mary Brown was making portraits of Uncle Sam and his wife Aunt Cindy — the one the coachman and the other "the mammy" of the family — and, as I was often admitted to the studio, I had the benefit of their reminiscences of the past. Of course, the language which they used was almost an "unknown tongue" to me, but I engaged one of the charming Johnston girls to both reproduce it for me *in statu quo* and in translation. Since the original expression is fast dying out, as the old negroes die out, I will here copy one of the monologues of that interesting character, Aunt Cindy, through

which the reader may form a fair estimate of the relation between the best slave-owners and their trusted slaves in those days of yore. Imagine her seated in the studio — after one of those sittings for her portrait — with her head covered by the orthodox turban and her fat hands crossed on her capacious lap, while she thus addressed her attentive audience: "Yes, honey, you jes ought to hab seen dem good ole days when Mars John and ole Miss was young, an dey fust come to our place Lauderdale to live! You mus know dat dis here place belonged to our fambly — de Gordons and not to de Johnstons. I'm telling you bout dem days, when Sam an me was young too! Seem like taint but yistiddy dat *I* was married to Sam, an a gran weddin it *was*. Ole Miss was de finest gal in dis here country in dem days, an all de men was plum crazy to git her, but Mars John Gordon was fust da (I tell you, if dey git ahead of him, dey

got to rise fore day in de mornin). Well Mars John sez to me, 'Cindy' sez he, 'I gwine to marry de likeliest gal in dis here country, an I gwine to give you to her for a maid. I spec you to be de nicest maid bout here too. I done tuk you, case I lowed dat you'd be de smartest an best servant on de land for dat purpose."

"'Mars John' sez I, 'I'm gwine to show you dat I'll do my best fur my new Mistis!' Well, never will I forgit dat day, when dey come home from de weddin! Twas a time! All de niggers on de lan was lowed to come to de house, an git a look an a smile from de new Mistis. Sam, as de driver of de family cerrage and I as de lady's maid, was in de front, an show de cornfield niggers how to make deir bow an hold deyselves. When de cerrage stop at de big door, *out* steps Mars John and gives his hand to my Mistis! De Lord, honey! What a sight she was! I den an

da lowed to myself dat she was de prettiest creetur I ever seed ! An how she give us all such a smile and greetin ! Dat was my young Mistis — an dat was my ole Mistis — all de days uv her life ! Manys de time when she had so much on her mind bout de plantation 'fairs, dat I lowed she'd go crazy, but she knowed how to stand everything somehow ! Twant long nuther fore I had to give up bein lady's maid to be mammy to my Mistis' chillun, case she wanted me to be dat. Patsy and Ria was mad enough dat dey was not chosen, bein as dey was older and more speunced in nussin. But by Mistis wanted me, an I vowed dat I'd do a mammy's part by dem too. Twant long for Sam come sparkin round me, an I gun to believe it was time for me to git married like Mistis done done, and I aint seed no nigger roun da so good a chance as Sam ! 'Sides dat, he boun to git many things from Marster in de way

of cloes an other things an we could have de biggest nigger weddin, too. When I told Mistis bout it, she said, 'Cindy,' sez she, 'if you want to marry Sam, we's willin an we will give you a nice "set out" an let you be married in the parlor or dining-room.' Dat settled it! I does wish, honey, you could hab seen dat weddin! Sam was stiff and starched in Mars John's shirt and collar an old broadcloth coat and pants, but my Mistis aint behind in dressin me too! I had a white dress and ribbin bows an veil an orange-flowers an white gloves, an I could hardly put my mind on de preacher for de finery I had on! How we did feast after de ceremony in de big-room over de kitchen, an all de darkies was wishing deyselves us! But you ought to hab seen Christmas times at our house. Dem was de times! In dem days, de decanters of wine and sperits set on de sideboard all de time, but when Christ-

mas come den was de egg-nogg bowl brought down from de top shelf uv de chany closet, an de power of rum an eggs an milk we did mix for Christmas day! I hab beat eggs til I was tired, gitting ready for de folks dat had to come and drink outer dat bowl! I must low dat more dan white folks got more dan was good fo dem, for every nigger dat called 'Christmas gift' to Mars John got his cup uv egg-nogg sure, an some uv dem come more dan once a day! De turkeys — de sassage — de old hams — de plum puddings — de mince pies we had in dem Christmas days! I had one boy named Gus, an da was only one son in de fambly uv Gordons, so dat my son was de body-guard uv his young Marster. I told Gus dat, ef he ever could be like dat boy in any way, I'd thank de good Lord. Some folks seem like dey is made better'n udders, an my young Marster was allers a good boy! Spite uv de fac uv bein

de only son an heir, he done come to me an say, 'Mammy,' sez he, 'I does love you so much, an I want to be a good boy an make my mother happy!' Den I'd take him in my arms an hug him an say, 'Lord bless de chile!' An so he grew up fast — handsome an tall — an we all was proud of him. Dey do say dat Mistis an me both loved dat chile most, an I spec we did. Wimmin folks is powerful foolish bout boys, when dey aint got but one to be fool bout! But I'll say for my Mistis, dat she never forget to make our boy plum de track uv rite an know his rite place to everybody on de lan. An how she did teach him dat *Bible* an dem verses out'n it, long wid all de rest! I used to low dat our chillun was de smartest I ever seed, bout gittin verses an prars an things. I see dem now come in an take deir seats, while she call on one by one to say what she done teach dem! An Gus an my chillun had deir

work to do too for her! Oh by Mistis, dey can't never show me sich anoder one! But we had our troubles as well as our good times. I brings to membrunce dat time when de dipthery got to our house, an three uv de chillun was down at once. But our little man was de fust to fall sick, an I never kin forgit how Mistis come in de nursery an woke me up sayin 'Cindy,' sez she, 'git up quick an send Sam for de doctor, for my boy is very sick an I can't do nothing for him!' Lord, how I was skeered! I never had such combunxion in my life! Dat was your own dear Pa, Miss Vera, an ef you could had seed his face so hot an his poor limbs so restless, you'd hab thought him bout to go! Twant long fore Dr. Baker come an gun to work on him, fast an furious. All dat night an nex day an many a day was we all doin our level best to keep off de ole enemy — death — from our boy. Den, two

more uv de chillun was took sick wid de same disease an de power of physic dey all had to have an de nights we had to set up an nus dem ! Tween de chillun, I did *not* know which to watch most, an, sometimes, I felt most like a chicken wid her hed cut off, jist floundering roun — doin no good. Still, Mistis sed I mus stay wid her an de white-folks all de time, *and da I was !* Oh de good prars dat went up to Heaven for our chillun's lives dat time ! Mars Cumberland George come mighty often to de house an help prars wid de fambly, an he'd make us feel dat de Lord was wid us more'n ever. Yes, de Lord was wid us, an we praised His good name for it ! But talkin bout de Lord, brings back dat funny time in de big barn, whar meetin was gwine on for de niggers. In dem days de marsters used to range for de servants to hab preachin to dem often in de big, grain barns. Dey would hab seats brought in an

de preacher would stan on a box an preach to dem. Den many uv de mammies an men — whar could not go to de churches — would hobble to de barn or be holped da to hear de word uv God. De preachers was sometimes black an sometimes white, an dey allus had good congregashuns. On dis here occasion, de preacher was old Brer Job Smith, whar was a powerful zorter an allus talkin bout gwine to Heaven an Gabriel blowin uv his horn. Right above de floor uv de barn — whar de folks was ranged — was a hayloft, an, up da, some bad white boys — sort *uv poor white trash* — had hid deyselves *wid tin horns*, hopin for to hear Brer Smith talk bout *horns*, an have deir fun. Well, sure nough, Brer Smith got powerful warmed up, an he cry out more'n once dat he ready for to go, jist as soon as de good Lord call him home, an den de brethren an sisters holler back "Amen," "Dat's so," "I'se ready,

good Lord, too", "Come long, let's go too," an sich like, an I mought say de whole congregashun was bout to go to Heaven in sperit. Dis all move Brer Smith to git higher, an he, at last calls out in de biggest voice you ever heerd, "Yes, Gabriel blow your horn, an I'se ready to go!" Jist den, sich another blowin uv horns cum from above his head, dat it seem like Gabriel done cum sure nough! Den, de noise an scufflin an hobblin an hollowin dat gun to rise in dat barn was awful! Brer Smith fell off uv his box an roll on de floor — Sis Patsy — whar aint walked good for ten years — got to de door widout enny help — Brer Sampson forgot he was lame an run out — Sis Liza — widout enny teeth an deaf — call out, 'No, Lord, I aint quite ready yit!' an every last nigger was makin for de yard at once. I won't say I was outen de ring, but I kept my mouf shet enny way, an didn't hab to eat my

words like de rest. Sides dat, I looked up, an see some eyes at de crack in de floor, whar made me spicious uv some trick or nuther. Den I went out uv dat barn some slower dan de rest. Twant no us fur to try to bring back dem niggers, for when dey is good skeered, dey is done for for dat time enny way ! But we had many good times in de barns and in de churches too. My Mistis an Marster wus allus studyin on de souls uv deir slaves, if nobody else did. Dey tells me, nowadays, dat some folks do treat deir slaves wrong, an I spose it is so, for all white folks aint alike enny more dan black ones ! But my white-folks was de right kind, an dey had more trouble bout dem slaves dan you'd low. I've often heerd my Mistis say dat she knowed dat Mars John owned dem, jist as truly as his lan, an dat his fore-fathers had bought dem jist as honestly as anything else dey had, but dey was a heavy burden on her

to care for and do right by. She was, really, de greatest *slave* on de lan herself, I lowed. From mornin till night, it was allus doin somethin for somebody, white or black! Oh my Mistis! Ef you was beautiful when Mars John got you, you was most beautiful when you got older an your chillun was grown up roun you! An when I gun to see signs uv failure in you, how my poor heart gun to sink! Seem to me like dat, if you went out uv de world, it would be very dark to poor Cindy! You seem to git much better, case Mars John took you to de Springs an to Canady an roun fur your health, an I lowed dat my fears was wrong. But one day when I least spected it, you called me to your room an shet de door, an sed solemn-like, 'Cindy,' sez you to me, 'I feel dat you's a good friend uv mine.'

"'Oh my Mistis,' sez I, 'I does luv you, an you knows it well!'

"'I does know it, Mammy!' sez you, callin me what de chillun did, 'an I hate to tell you what I must, on dat account!'

"Den I feels somethin risin in my throat like a great big lump a-choking me, an I can't say nothing.

"'Try not to take it too hard, Mammy,' sez you to me with a sigh! 'Life is very hard to bear sometimes, and yet we love to live, specially, when we has so much as I has to live for.'

"'What *does* you mean?' sez I, bustin into tears.

"'Ise tryin to prepare de way uv tellin you, dear Mammy, dat I might not live very long,' sez you, commin an puttin your dear hand on my shoulder. 'But God knows best, Cindy, an I can say, "Thy will be done!"'

"I looked up from my apron whar my eyes was buried, an seem like I saw an angel gazin down at, stid of my mortal mistis!

"'Who done tole you dat bad news, Mistis?' I cried.

"'More than one doctor done tole me dat I has de heart disease, an enny time, when I least spect it, down I will drop dead.'

"'What *will* we do widout you?' I sed in agony.

"'God will show dat I'm not de only person in de world. He will soon put some one in my place, Cindy!' you sez, wid dat beautiful smile uv yours dat allus went to my heart.

"'I jest feel dat, if *you* go, Mistis, I want to go, too,' sez I.

"'Now, Cindy, I wants to show you, fore I's took so sick dat I can't speak, dat I depen on you to take better keer uv *my chilluns* arter I'm gone dan now. Dey loves you most as much as me, an you hav been wid dem ever since dey was born!'

"'Yes I will — I will do my best fur dem,

Mistis, you knows I will — whedder you'se here or gone !'

"'But I want to feel in my dyin moment — come when de good Lord thinks best — dat you'se got it on your mind as my last request, never to leave dem or forsake dem !'

"Wid dese words, your voice trembled a little an you looked a little sad, but soon you went on, 'But why should I feel too sad at the thought uv parting from my loved ones ? De same God, dat watches dem now, will watch dem when I am gone an take cear of dem. An I know dat, ef God calls me home suddenly, fore I am old, He knows dat is best for his chile, an I would not have it enny other way !'

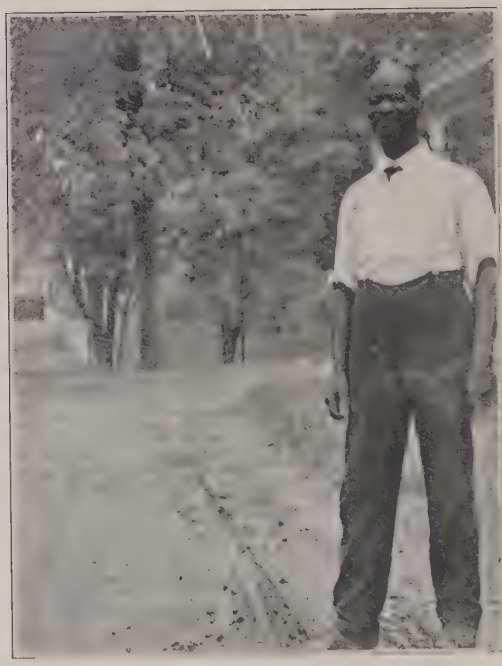
"Dis here conversation wid my Mistis seemed like a secret 'tween us, for she never said no more bout de subject, an I never said nothing to nobody bout it nuther. Den for a long time, every thing went on so nice, dat,

agin, I most forgot to be skeered bout my Mistis' health. De chillun was now most grown, an done all dat we cud want dem to do. Young Marster was gwine to de Univarsity next year, an Miss Sallie an de other gals was off at boarding-school, too, most uv de year. Twas in vacation time an all de fambly was at home, when dat turrible day come on like a thief in the night, as de good Book says. I was settin down da in my own house darning socks and stockings, when Mary Jane come runnin from de big house to me, an, wid her eyes most poppin out uv her head, sez 'Aunt Cindy, Master says run as hard as you kin to Mistis, fur she's powerful sick.' Fur one minute, my heart seemed to stop beatin itself, den I threw down my work an run upstairs as fast as I could go. When I seed her da on de bed, I gun to feel my knees tremble under me, for I seemed to know dat her time — what she had tole me

bout — done come now for sure ! All de fambly — Marster an de chillun an relations an some servants was da by de bed, but, when I come up, she looked at me an kinder smiled an gasped, 'Remember !' Arter dat, she bid farewell to dem all in dese words, 'I am gwine to Heaven — it's all bright for me !' an, fore we knowed it her blessed sperit was gone to de udder world ! What a time was dat ! Seem like de sun done gone down in mid-day in our house arter dat ! Seem like food didn't taste right — seem like de birds never sung right — seem like taint right to hear enny body laugh or play enny more, sence my Mistis done gone away ! De big house was so lonesome since she done left it forever, an de fambly look so sad and troubled ! Da was Miss Vera dat seem like she gwine to grieve herself away for her Ma, an, as to my young Marster, he went wid his head sorter bowed down,

though he aint sed a word agin de right uv God to take away his blessed treasure uv a Ma. I den brought to membunce dat time, when my Mistis asked me to do more'n when she was gone dan *fore* for dem chillun, an I think I'd hab *died mournin for her too*, ef I hadn't been obleeged to look arter dem chillun uv hers. De fust time, Vera seemed to take notice uv enny thing arter de funeral was when I went to her, an tole bout dat conversation wid her Ma bout two years fore she died, an Miss Sallie an Margaret was more than moved, when dey heard bout it. Yes, my Mistis was de best woman dat ever lived ! . . . But I settin here talkin all day, an forgit dat I got some work to do fore night !"

Finis.



DUSKY PLOTTER FRANK

# HOW FRANK CHRISTIAN GOT HIS MASTER'S SHOTE

# HOW FRANK CHRISTIAN GOT HIS MASTER'S SHOTE

"I clar to gracious, dat shote is the most 'ticingest thing I done seen lately," said Frank Christian to himself as, in the early morning, he passed through the stable-yard of Judge Christian's place on his way to work. "It fairly makes my mouf water to look dat way!"

It is proper here to explain that many favored slaves, in the *ante bellum* times in which this true episode occurred, took the names of their owners (as in the present case) and arrogated to themselves no small authority and superiority over their fellow slaves in consequence of their acquisition. Frank was a fair specimen of the class described,

and if anyone had insinuated to him that he was meditating *stealing* one of the rolling-fat pigs now happily disposed around their mother in the stable-yard, he would have indignantly denied the thought. To the darkey of those days, nothing that was *taken* from "Marster" was *stealing*, and everything he owned was shared by the slaves, at least to the extent of presenting any sense of injuring him when they helped themselves to what they needed or imagined they wanted. It was the universal custom of Eastern Virginia farmers of those times to allow many slaves to raise their own fowls and pigs, and often to plant their own potato and corn patches, and the proceeds of their industry were eaten or sold, just as the owners chose.

It certainly had been Frank's custom to keep a good supply of "shote" to satisfy the "mouth that would water" at the sight of

it, but Nancy, his better-half, had lately sold his last possession of this kind, without his knowledge or consent, and it was his misfortune to spy Marster's litter of pigs, too numerous for one to be missed, when the desire for "shote" was irresistible. Frank's morals could not stand the test of the sleek sides of the pig, so exactly suited for roasting that night in his fire, and fitting his palate just as well as the fire. It was, therefore, a matter of small time or thought to knock the unconscious victim in the head and secure it in a sack. But after his prize was thus secured, the question of a suitable hiding place for it, until the shades of night would enable him to bring it safely to his cabin, came into his mind with something of a shock. After thinking of several places, he decided upon carrying it to the family cemetery, which (as usual in that country) was situated on a proper elevation in a field about

half a mile from the house. Here he deposited his booty, minus the sack, exactly between the graves of the father and mother of his master, one of whom, the father, had but lately been laid in his last resting place. Considering the infrequency with which country people in those days visited their graveyards, this hiding place seemed entirely secure, and Frank went about his work all the forenoon with rosy-hued prospects of a feast of "shote" that night. But the best-laid plans of men are often frustrated by the merest accidents, and, as ill luck would have it, a near neighbor of the family, who had not yet seen the monument raised over the elder Christian, proposed during the afternoon to go with some of the children to see it. Frank, who did not fail to find out the unfortunate (to him) excursion, was, nevertheless, in his usual state of *sang foid* when the dead "shote" had been identified as one of the pig family

and that one number eleven, according to the unerring count of young John Christian, the son and heir, who had been first to find it in the graveyard, and nearly ran himself off his legs back to the house to report the theft to his father. Frank was serenely chopping wood, when Judge Christian, coming to the back porch, lifted up his indignant voice with:

"Frank! Frank! Come here sir; can you tell me anything about this confounded impudence of some one killing my pig and hiding him in the graveyard?"

With a countenance of even greater indignation than his interlocutor, Frank cried: "Lord bless us Marster, you don't tell me some ov dese sassy niggers done been an kill your 'shote,' an more'n dat, hide him in our graveyard?"

The Judge flattered himself that long observation of human nature — as well as extensive legal experience — had enabled

him to read the human countenance, but for this time he was completely deceived by his adversary. It was true that, knowing Frank's excessive weakness for "shote," the first suspicions of his mind turned to him, and yet, so attached was he to this slave, that he gladly recoiled from his injustice, when, instead of personal guilt and confusion, he read on his countenance indignation even greater than his own over the robbery.

Somehow, as he looked upon Frank's well-feigned indignation, his own wrath seemed to grow less, although he exclaimed: "I'll punish the impudent scoundrel well for this day's work! Just let me catch him and he'll rue it."

"Dat's it," rejoined Frank, "you'se right Mars John — an I just wish you'd let me be da too an giv him an extra lick — de nigger dat stole my Master's 'shote!'"

Judge Christian, being more and more edified by Frank's zeal replied, " Well, Frank, if I hadn't promised John to let him go with me to catch him, I would take you, because I think you are just in condition to put it on right. And, moreover, you would not be seen so far off as we would be."

" De Lordy, Marster, you aint gwine to try to ketch dat nigger fore dark, is you?"

" Why, to be sure, Frank, I hadn't thought of missing him by going before dark, but, since you mention it, I am afraid he won't come till later."

" Dat's so, Mars John!" urged Frank with growing heat. " Now dat de ' shote ' been found in de graveyard, de nigger aint gwine to be such a fool as to fotch him away in daylight."

" I'm glad I consulted you Frank," returned the Judge, now fully impressed not only with his servant's sympathy but with his

cleverness as well. "I will wait till after supper and creep up under the shades of night to catch the rogue."

With these words the master left Frank, and re-entered the house.

Softly chuckling over his victory and information, the dusky plotter wended his way to his cabin to complete his plan.

It was evident that the precious "shote" must be removed from its present position, and Judge Christian prevented from finding out the change of base. In order to stimulate his mind to the gigantic task of working out this plan, Frank took down from the high mantelpiece a cornstalk pipe, some strong tobacco, knocked out the ashes against the side of the mantelpiece, slowly filled and pipe, stuck it into the ashes to light it, and, comfortably resting his hands on his knees, puffed away with a vim. Could a kodak have been thrown upon that *ante bellum* pic-

ture, the world would have been richer by the acquisition to its character sketches. As the dark-skinned man of sixty years, with not a gray hair, and few wrinkles in his face, sat seeking inspiration from his pipe and the bright-burning logs on the fire, his helpmate, familiarly known as "Nancy," came bustling in, and, seeing the unusual sight of her husband bending over the fire in deep cogitation, exclaimed, "Now what done happened to Frank? He settin down da and studyin same as if he was gwine to praech a sarment to-morrow!"

Turning around and surveying his "ole oman" with that impressive air of superiority, so natural to man, especially in the lower walks of life, Frank replied, "Well, Nancy, I like to know what you'se got to do with my studyin? I know I kin study an' preach too if I wan' ter; but, lemme tell you dat I'se got cause to study bout sumpin more to de pint

now." Then growing more confidential he added, "You mus know, ole 'oman, dat I'se got in er pickle. Dis mornin, when I got up erbout de crack er day an' went to de stable, what should I see fust thing but Marster's ole sow an' de finest passel ob pigs I ever seed! 'Peared like, when I looked at dem pigs wid deir mammy, I wus boun' to hab one ob dem! Now, I 'lowed dat it didn't make no diffunce 'bout one pig, 'specially as Marster don't know he got leben pigs, and, 'sides dat, *what's Marster's* is mine. But I look de udder way an' try to fergit dat "*shote;*" bless your soul, my mouf would water arter him an' fuse to hab enny udder vittals. You knows *you* went an sol my las' pig, an' how kin I help myself but take Marster's? An' so, fo' I knowed what I wus doin, dat pig wus knocked over an' wus in my sack. Den I 'lowed I mus hide him till night, an' what place better den de graveyard, 'case all de niggers an' chilluns feared to go

da. But who would hab dreamed dat Miss Selden would dis verry day ax Mars John ter take her to see ole Marster's tombstone? When Mars John come to de back do' an' call me at de wood-pile 'bout dat dead pig, I tell you, I scrimmiged round in my membunce to say de right word, an' ha ! ha ! I did it too. So, Nancy, you jes' git me a good fire ready an' de pot hot, an' we'll hab 'shote' for supper."

Nancy, completely overwhelmed with the dilemma and her better-half's wisdom in managing it, yet dared to add, "But, Frank, what yer gwine to do ?"

Turning upon her unseemly curiosity all the withering power of a supercilious glance, he returned : "What ! yer reckon I gwine to tell all I knows to you ?" and suiting the action to the word, he rose, and putting away his pipe, stalked out of the room in magisterial grandeur.

While the family of Judge Christian was seated around the supper table and discussing the projected visit of father and son to the graveyard, Frank had already removed the precious " shote " in a sack to a neighboring clump of bushes, and, having exchanged a lot of hay for the " shote," had carefully covered himself with the same exactly between the graves of " Ole Marster and Mistis."

He had begun to grow tired, if not drowsy, in his warm nest, before the well-known notes of John's whistle fell upon his ear at no great distance. At this signal, Frank uttered a well-defined, but not exceedingly loud, groan, such as might characterize the first efforts to relieve oppression. Promptly young John stopped his gay tune, and cried : " Papa, what's that ? "

" Nothing but an owl, I reckon, Johnny," replied the Judge in a reassuring tone.

Encouraged by his sire's words, John re-

sumed his lively amusement — only to be cut short in a twinkling by a well-marked and more distressing groan from the graveyard, which was now close by. This time John could not be deluded with birds or animals as explanatory, but visions of dead ancestors (such as slaves were wont to picture to children's minds) loomed before his mental vision so vividly that he turned and ran back a little way.

But ashamed of his weakness, he turned once more to join his father, when a third and (to him) deafening and agonizing cry from the very grave of his grandfather, not long since buried, struck resistless terror to his heart and, answering it with a cry almost as painful, he took to his heels and soon found himself (in spite of darkness and obstructions), safe in his father's home ! And must I add the painful truth that Judge Christian was only a little way behind his son and heir in the race homeward ?

No one ever dared to joke the Judge about the "shote" adventure, as he let it be known that it was an interdicted subject, but it is a well-known fact that he never found out either the rogue who placed the pig in the graveyard nor yet the true source of the agonizing groans, which altered his usually dignified motions on that memorable night, but it is certain that his slave, Frank Christian, enjoyed a luscious dish of "shote" that night, slept a sleep more than usually dreamless and happy, and continued in the favor and confidence of his master, through all the remaining years of his life.

Finis.

MAMMY JANE

# THE
# PASSING OF MAMMY JANE

# THE PASSING OF MAMMY JANE

Sister and Brother were in great trouble about Mammy Jane, after the death of Uncle Jerry. To understand this, you must know that just before the Civil War, the poor babies were left motherless, and were tenderly cared for by Mammy Jane, till the time when they outgrew that need.

After freedom came in 1865, Uncle Jerry and Mammy Jane, then in the prime of life, went to work in earnest in a tobacco factory, in the town of Lynchburg, working harder than they had ever done in slavery, for the laudable purpose of buying a lot, building a home and making a good garden for their latter years. And nobly did they succeed and deserve success. In all the relations of

life, no man was more respectable than Uncle Jerry, no woman more trustworthy than Mammy Jane. And what a faithful, loving couple had they been in slavery and freedom to each other, and what true friends they had made of their master and mistress by their uniform industry, obedience, and skill! Who could make a better garden than Uncle Jerry, and who could excel Mammy Jane in plain sewing, or embroidery, or nursing, or what not?

But, now alas! poor Mammy, at 65 years, was left in that little home, so dearly bought, widowed, childless, and afflicted with that incurable disease known as Bright's! Moreover, she was deserted in her time of need, by a niece whom she had taken as an infant and reared as carefully as "her own white chillun might have been," as she said more than once to them. To whom could she or would she look in this sad time, except to

"her chillun" of Anglo-Saxon race? These were her children by right of faithful service in their babyhood, and they gladly showed their willingness to share, if need be, their last penny with their black foster-mother. Fortunately for Mammy, Brother was a skillful physician, prepared to wage a long combat with Mammy's dread disease, and Sister was ready to go through all weathers and difficulties to brighten her last days with smiles and gifts of love. So it was arranged that Mammy Jane should have the left-hand up-stairs room of Hattie Morton, her niece, living near the home of "her chillun," and another relative, young and efficient, was hired by them to watch and tend her every want.

It is not our purpose to dwell on the progress of the monster disease eating out the life of poor Mammy Jane, but we must, at least, note that never in all the long nine

months of fading away did the coming of "my chillun" fail to light the dull eyes or smooth the furrowed brow, or break the nervous mouth into smiles. Oh love! oh mother-love, only by thee, could such magic have been wrought! Oh black mammy of the old times, how rapidly did you go to your eternal reward! Oh beautiful result of the Christian influences of our progenitors upon the poor African, how sadly did you hasten to leave this earth! Right here, let your children record for the enlightenment of future generations (who can never know you personally) this tribute to your worth!

To return to a few particulars of the narrative: On a bright October day, Sister and Brother sped away on their bicycles to visit Mammy Jane and arrange for her future.

After a warm welcome was extended by the hostess, the following conversation ensued:

Sister: "Well, Mammy Jane, we are troubled because your adopted child has left you here widowed and helpless."

Mammy: "Yes, honey, that's so." And with more sadness, she added, "Nancy, that I took as a baby and raised like my own, dont love me nor stay with me, but thank the Lord, I have got some 'white chillun' left to me."

Brother: "Yes, indeed, Mammy, we are your children and are ready to do all that we can for you. We have decided that it is best to move you to Hattie Morton's house near us, where we can look after you all the time. Rent your house, if possible, to a good tenant and live on that money, but if you cannot do so, you will never suffer for anything, while we live."

When these cheering words fell on the ears of Mammy Jane, she burst into tears, threw her arms around the speaker and ejaculated,

in the midst of her sobs — "The Lord bless you, the Lord bless you, my chillun! I allus prayed to Him, since Jerry left me, to take care of me, and, now, my prar is answered."

And so it was.

To Sister and Brother, there was real pleasure in ministering, day after day, to their childhood's friend. And to them there was real beauty in her comparatively regular features, dark brown skin and kinky hair, always neatly bound in a turban. Moreover, her small stature and well-fitting clothes added force to her pleasant manners while her soft voice, to one blindfolded, might easily have been mistaken for that of her charming mistress of *ante bellum* days.

But neither great love nor medical skill could seriously delay the approach of the last great enemy, and no one seemed to more fully realize its certainty than Mammy herself.

One day when Sister arrived with fruits and flowers in the early Spring, she found her mammy more than usually bright and cheerful.

She was quick to say, "Honey, I wants to make my will to-day and leave all I have to you, 'my chillun.'"

With surprise, Sister looked up and replied: "How sweet of you to wish it, Mammy Jane, but neither of us could think of accepting your offer. However, we will ask you to will your possessions to Patsy Morton, your niece, hired by us to nurse you, and your watch to Hattie Morton's little girl. We, specially, request that your ungrateful niece Nancy, who refused to nurse or help you even for pay, should not receive a penny."

"*Course*, *course*, I will, honey," answered Mammy, with enthusiasm. "So get the paper ready, and I'll sign it with my mark. Now

aimt I shamed cause Mistis never could get me to learn to write?"

And thus it came to pass that the doctor vouched for her sanity — the lawyer, Simms, drew up the document legally, and it was, duly, signed by Mammy with witnesses of celebrity, one a president of a college for whites, the other a nephew of Mammy, and a black farmer. Not many weeks later, on a beautiful June morning, when all nature was decked with flowers and green, the sad news was brought that Mammy Jane had left us. How often in life, do we see the picture of some fair flower of humanity fading away just as the flowers of nature are bursting into efflorescence! Suddenly — so suddenly that Patsy could not summon her children, Mammy Jane passed from earth to Heaven. Many times, when she was suffering from spells, had she told her friends, white and black, that she was ready to answer the sum-

mons when the Lord wanted her to go. For years she had laid away in her trunk, her burial dress called "shroud," and had particularly requested to be buried with Sister's picture on her breast. When Sister came into the upper chamber, and viewed for the last time, the beloved features of her mammy, now serene and to her, beautiful in death, tears of genuine bereavement surged from a heart mourning for the loss of a foster-mother.

And now, this sketch of an almost extinct type might cease, were it not fitting to describe the funeral of this rare class of beings. Like many of *post bellum* negroes, Mammy Jane had, for many years, been paying a monthly fee to a society to insure for herself a nice coffin and decent burial. "My chillun," sorrowfully followed the corpse as chief mourners and ocupied the best seats in the church. To their genuine

grief, it was a great trial to hear the loud cries of some relatives, whose present demonstrations of sorrow were in great contrast to their neglect of her in life. Notably, their patience was altogether lost with the ungrateful Nancy, whose loudest cries of seeming bereavement marred the beauty of the occasion.

The best Baptist and Methodist preachers of several towns and villages were collected to pay the last tribute of respect to Mammy Jane, known to them as Mrs. Nicholas. Among the Baptist orators of the occasion was Preacher John Morton, husband of Hattie, who had given her aunt house-room and help in time of need, and he proved a speaker of some eloquence and power, for his personal experience with Mammy Jane added conviction to his words. It really seemed worth while for Mammy to have lived and suffered in his home, for, from a heart stirred

with genuine emotion, he drew a graphic picture of her piety, good manners, great industry and varied accomplishments which commanded the admiration of both white and black listeners. And before he closed his earnest remarks, he did not fail to call the attention of his black auditors to the unremitting, tender care of Mammy's white children to her in sickness as well as in health, and commended to them her example of piety, honesty, sobriety and fidelity as the most desirable way to live in this world and to reach the bliss of a better one.

After the last song of Zion died away, the last prayer was uttered and the newly made grave of Mammy Jane was covered with floral tributes, "my chillun" turned away from the scene with the distressing thought, "Never shall we look upon her like again."

And now they commit to print this tender tribute to the "loved and lost," that future generations may at least know that such specimens of humanity have blessed this wicked world.

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